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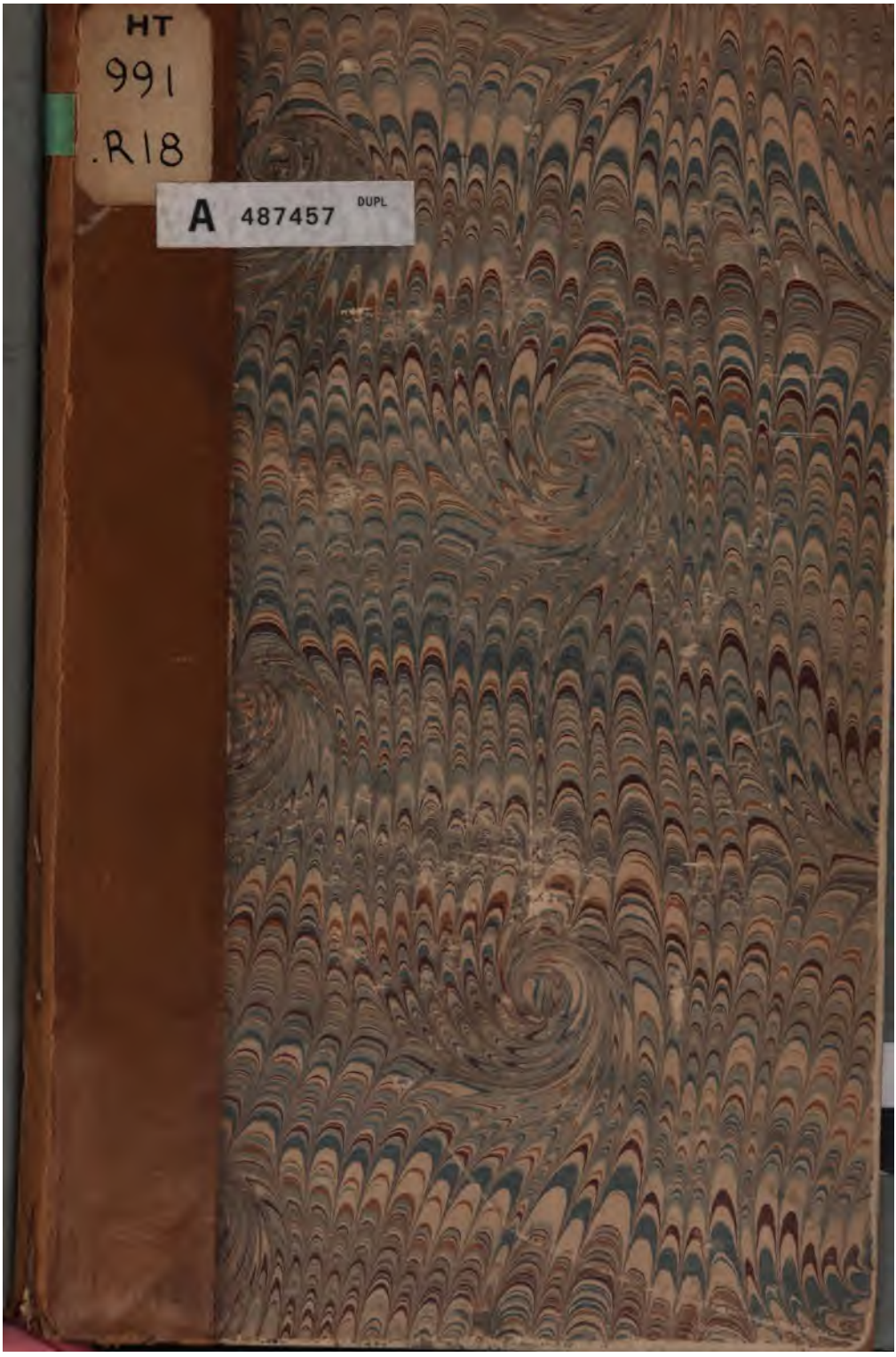

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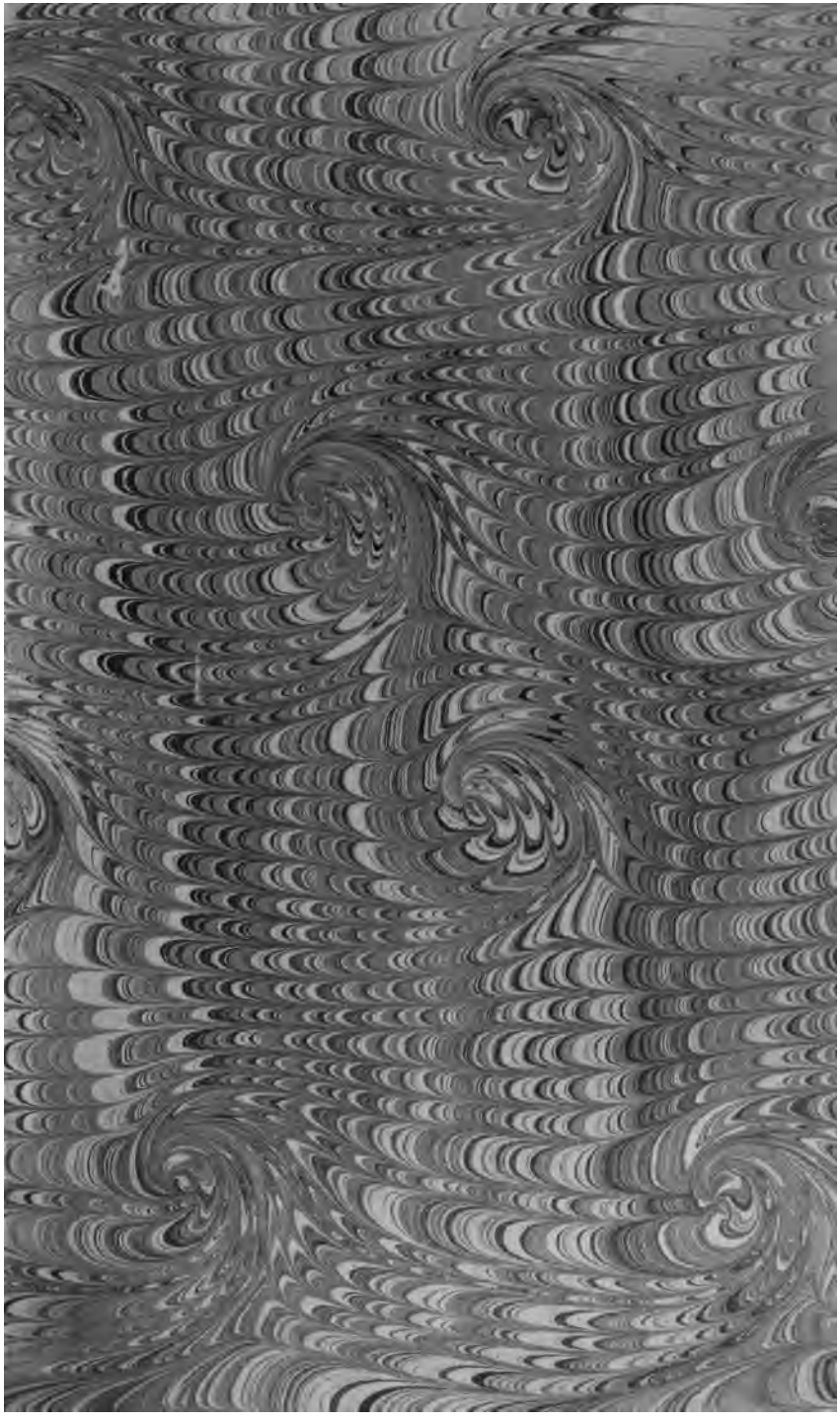

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James Ramsay

AN

INQUIRY

INTO THE

EFFECTS

OF

PUTTING A STOP

TO THE

African Slave Trade,

AND OF

Granting LIBERTY to the SLAVES

IN THE

BRITISH SUGAR COLONIES.

By the AUTHOR of

The ESSAY ON THE TREATMENT AND CONVERSION OF AFRICAN SLAVES IN THE BRITISH SUGAR COLONIES.

LONDON:

Printed and Sold by JAMES PHILLIPS, in GEORGE-YARD, LOMBARD-STREET. 1784.

Advertiſement.

THE preſent inquiry was originally intended to have made a part of the Author's Eſſay on the ſubject of Slavery. But by the advice of thoſe, to whom the propriety of that publication was ſubmitted, it was ſuppreſſed, till matters ſhould become ripe, and mens minds be prepared for the diſcuſſion. The Author is now obliged to publiſh it, perhaps prematurely, in defence of the principles of his work.

The Monthly Reviewers, in their Review, June 1784, were pleaſed to give a criticiſm on the Eſſay, which, conſidering it as a compoſition, was perhaps full as favourable as it deſerved. The writer never has publiſhed either for reputation or profit, never has acted the Author, but when his opportunities and ſituation preſſed him into the ſervice of his country and his king. Praiſe or blame in a Review could, therefore, be to him a matter only of imaginary moment: and were it not ſo, that impartiality, which

alone can ſupport ſuch a work as theirs, muſt render it impertinent in an Author to thank them for their commendation, and vain to reproach them for their cenſure.

But that feeling and ſentiment, which firſt ſuggeſted to the Author the diſcuſſion of this ſubject, will not ſuffer him to be indifferent to its ſucceſs. The Author, while arguing for the abolition of ſlavery, is repreſented as a friend to the ſlave trade; and, while treating of a ſubject ſufficient to ſoften the moſt obdurate heart, is cenſured for ſhewing leſs enthuſiaſm and ardour than Rouſſeau and Reynal have affected, when labouring only to make palatable a poiſon aimed at every thing of worth and dignity in human nature. It is true, in their Review of July, they have, on his remonſtrance, candidly ſaid, "they have perhaps expreſſed themſelves without ſufficient accuracy," in repreſenting him as a friend to the ſlave trade, and they have ſubjoined a note from his book, which enables the Reader to judge for himſelf. This, as far as regards his character, ought to be ſatisfactory to him. But the charge remains againſt

againſt his book; "It ſpeaks with extreme "caution of the horrid trade." Now there is not a paſſage in it, that he truſts can bear ſuch an interpretation; but ſeveral that condemn it in pointed terms. It was not within the plan of what was publiſhed to treat directly of it; but when it came in his way, it found no quarter. However, to put the matter out of diſpute, he offers the following article to the public. If his plan be objected againſt as viſionary, he ſhall only anſwer, that every thing muſt have a beginning; and that there are many parts of the ſlave coaſt, where the inhabitants are ſufficiently poliſhed to be capable of carrying on the manufacture of ſugar, planting tobacco, and indigo; that they already have rice of a more valuable quality than that of the Carolinas.

With reſpect to his want of ardour and enthuſiaſm, as if he betrayed the intereſt he pretends to eſpouſe, he anſwers: Indiſcriminate blame never was intended. Planters are like, are not worſe than, the common run of men; many would not loſe by compariſon with the better ſort of people in

Britain. It is their ſituation, it is the very nature of ſlavery, that leads to all that inconſiderate oppreſſion and ſuffering which take place in the relation of maſter and ſlave. He has accordingly obſerved, that theſe cauſes almoſt univerſally operate more ſtrongly in adventurers from Europe, than in natives of the colonies. Now the intention of his book was to convince and conciliate, not to inflame;—to ſhew that the maſter's true intereſt was to be found on the ſide of liberty, and of moral and religious improvement, not in niggardly pinching, not in ſtripes, chains, and nakedneſs. But ſo intimately is the ſubject connected with ſentiment, ſo naturally did a warmth of expreſſion mix with every part, that the Author's great aim in every tranſcription has been to ſoften whatever could be ſuppoſed capable of offending. And after all the ſeverity, that moderation and his regard for individuals called for in the correction, better judges, who decided ultimately on the work, thought proper to prune not only words, phraſes and ſentences, but whole paragraphs, ſo as often to leave the expreſſion naked, and the connection obſcure, rather than ſuffer any improper

proper warmth to appear. After ſubmitting this account to the Reader, that unbluſhing, unprincipled monſter Rouſſeau (ſee his Confeſſions) is welcome to poſſeſs, unenvied by the Author, all *the gloom and ardour* for which he is celebrated.

The Author takes this opportunity of obſerving an objection made by ſome pious perſons to the reformation propoſed by him, drawn from the ill ſucceſs of his own private endeavours to inſtruct ſlaves. He offered it as a ſtrong argument, to ſhew the neceſſity of advancing the condition of ſlaves, before they can be made objects of religion; or rather to ſhew, that civil privileges and religious inſtruction muſt go hand in hand. If this be duly weighed, the objection here mentioned muſt conclude greatly in favour of his plan.

This objection has given him the more chagrin; becauſe he does not find in it that attention to the ſcope of the argument, which its importance requires. His aim is to prove Africans objects of religion; the advantages of which are chiefly to the ſlaves

themſelves. In conformity with the generous ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and to make their maſters propitious to his views, he proves even to demonſtration, that every degree of liberty conferred on them would be ſo much gain to their preſent maſters, and, if conferred in proportion as their faculties opened, would facilitate the reception of religion among them. Hence ariſes in his plan the union of liberty and religion both ſlowly advancing together, without any abrupt or violent change in the condition of the ſlaves themſelves. He is clearly of opinion, that the diſtinction of maſter and ſlave never was meant by the God of nature to be an object of ſociety, and the effects of the abolition of ſlavery in Europe confirm his judgment; but he is alſo of opinion, that ſince ſlavery has taken place, its ſtrict diſcipline may be made ſubſervient to the purpoſes of religion.

Nor is there any thing in the account of the author's own ſlaves to countenance this deſpondent concluſion. In the laſt nine years it is to be obſerved, that he had made conſiderable ſteps. He ſhould indeed have remarked, that the principal part of his

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ſlaves were grown up when they came from Africa, and therefore never could perfectly acquire the Engliſh language, nor form any adequate ideas of any general abſtract terms with which they were not acquainted in their own country, but that his few creoles were particularly ſenſible and acute.—Still the ſucceſs of the Moravians, which he finds is much more complete, and truly pleaſing to the pious mind, than he from his former information could have repreſented it, is a convincing proof that very conſiderable advances may be made among the negroes, even in their preſent ſtate. And, as the pious divine, who conducts the labours of theſe truly apoſtolical preachers, obſerves, Chriſtianity inſenſibly draws after it relaxation of ſlavery and perſonal privileges. Oppreſſion is often unwillingly forced to draw back his heavy hand from meek and willing ſubmiſſion.

But whatever be the conſequences, the author muſt continue generally to inſiſt on the propriety and even neceſſity that liberty and religion ſhould advance ſlowly together. A Heathen ſlave is leſs valuable than a Chriſtian

ſtian ſlave; this laſt is much leſs valuable than a Chriſtian freeman. We want every motive that can be drawn from freedom and religion to ſecure propriety of conduct. The negroes have two claſſes of friends, one that looks chiefly to liberty, while the other regards only religion. Suppoſe them free untutored heathens. There are crowds of unprincipled idle thieves and robbers let looſe on the public. Suppoſe a Chriſtian ſlave offering up with his maſter his devotions to their common Father on Sunday. See him on Monday morning, by the caprice of a boy overſeer, held with his face downwards by his hands and feet, till his back be furrowed with the cart-whip, his fleſh torn in pieces, and his whole body rendered one loathſome wound. While humanity gives her tear of pity, can religion ſmile or ſanctify the horrid oppreſſive relation of maſter and ſlave, that makes ſuch havock in the claims of brotherhood. But why may not both claſſes unite to vindicate from oppreſſion and heatheniſh ignorance the ill-fated race, why grudge each other's claims, and leave oppreſſion and tyranny to profit by their oppoſition?

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INQUIRY, &c.

IT may be aſked, ſuppoſing the African ſlave trade ſtopt, and the negroes on our ſugar colonies made freemen, how will the meaſure affect the trade and intereſt of Great Britain and her colonies? Will not a gainful commerce with Africa be ſhut up? Will not our ſugar colonies, if peopled with freemen, deſpiſe the rule of Britain, becauſe they do not feel it, and join themſelves to America? In this caſe, will not a great ſource of national wealth be cut off, and that nurſery for ſeamen, on which our navy depends, be greatly contracted?

I ſtate the argument in the ſtrongeſt manner for thoſe who favour ſlavery, and ſhall not uſe one expreſſion to explain away its force. I am ſeriouſly of opinion that the ſugar trade, with which that for ſlaves is connected at preſent, is of the utmoſt importance

portance to the ſtate; and that any ſudden ſhock, that affects it, will be widely and deeply felt: and it muſt be confeſſed, that ſeveral of the ſugar colonies ſhewed, in the beginning of the late diſputes, ſtrong ſigns of an unaccountable bias to the ideal empire of America.

North America is now ſeparated for ever from the Britiſh ſtate; and though one muſt continue to wiſh that the operation had been accompanied with leſs violence, and had left a leſs ugly ſcar behind it, yet neither ſentiment nor policy will permit the friend of Britain to deſire a reunion. While Americans remember the methods by which they acquired their independency, they muſt be ſuſpicious of every thing wherein Britain is concerned. It will remind them of the circumſtances of a conteſt, which brought both parties to the brink of ruin. No dependence can be placed in the forming any new connection with them, where they themſelves ſhall not have the advantage, or where they can treat with other nations on the ſame or equal terms. Nor can any treaty be laſting, which is made with a people where

where a deſigning demagogue, working on an ignorant town committee, can preſcribe to the legiſlature. We ſhall therefore have no tie over them but conveniency; and we are free to ſettle our trade, and accommodate ourſelves in the manner that will beſt ſuit our own purpoſes, without taking into account how it may probably affect them. We ſhall by and by apply this reaſoning to our ſubject.

We have now upwards of 200 years traded with Africa in human fleſh, and encouraged in the negroe countries wars, rapine, deſolation, and murders, that we might be ſupplied with that commodity. The avarice with which we crowded the ſlave ſhips, and the caution that ſelf-preſervation made neceſſary to guard againſt their riſing during the voyage, have deſtroyed in almoſt every inſtance a conſiderable proportion. The ſeaſoning of them in our iſlands has in general cut off ſtill more; and thoſe that have ſurvived in too many caſes, have been, to ſay no worſe, preſerved only for hunger, ſtripes, and oppreſſive labour. On the whole, we have conſidered the trade only

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as a matter of gain; and as ſuch in any probable future ſtate of our ſugar colonies, it cannot be reckoned higher, in every poſſible view, than the ſupplying of the wants, and reaping of the labour of half a million of people.

But ſuppoſe that by eſtabliſhing factories, and encouraging civilization on the coaſt of Africa, and returning ſome of our Weſt Indian ſlaves to their original country, we ſhould try to make up for our paſt treachery to the natives, and guard againſt the views of the Americans on our ſugar colonies, by inſtructing the inhabitants in the culture of tobacco, indigo, cotton, rice, &c. to barter with us for our manufactures, and ſupply us with thoſe articles, our demand for which has been ſo advantageous to America, and ſo well enabled her to ſet up for herſelf. Were Africa civilized, and could we preoccupy the affections of the natives, and introduce gradually our religion, manners, and language among them, we ſhould open a market, that would fully employ our manufacturers and ſeamen, morally ſpeaking, till the end of time. And while we enrich-

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ed ourſelves, we ſhould contribute to their happineſs. For Africa, in its higheſt probable ſtate of culture, could not poſſibly interfere with the ſtaple of Britain, ſo as to hinder an extenſive and mutually advantageous trade from being carried on between the countries. The great difference of climate and ſoil muſt always diſtinguiſh the ſupplies and wants of each.

Suppoſe, then, (and let it be attended to that I only ſuppoſe it) the ſugar colonies ſubdued, or incorporated willingly with America, we might carry on a much more uſeful and extenſive trade, than hitherto has been done, in every American and Weſt Indian article with free people in Africa, without making them any burdenſome loans, or being under any uneaſy alarms about them. And without attempting any monopoly, or inſiſting on any preference, the goodneſs of our manufactures, and ſpirit of our traders, muſt always continue to command the moſt valuable branches of that commerce. Nor need it be a vain idea to expect in time to be ſupplied from Africa with various valuable wines in exchange for

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our ſtaple commodities, inſtead of paying for them in money to our more northern rivals.—How muſt even this diſtant thought of the ſubject warm the heart, while it contemplates, as gained to the true religion, and to legal ſociety, not a colony, but a continent, whoſe barbarous manners, and brutiſh ignorance, have ſo long diſgraced the human character, and ſunk it in ſloth and depravity well nigh below compaſſion!

Should it be objected, that if we abandon the African trade, our rivals will extend their ſhare in it, by which their wealth will be immediately increaſed, and their ſugar colonies improved to the certain advancement of their, and as certain loſs of our, naval importance, I might leave the anſwer to the man of morality and ſentiment; but I fear not to encounter it in a political view. That the African trade is in itſelf deſtructive to our ſeamen, is known to every perſon who has an acquaintance with it. Indeed a mortality among his crew in the middle paſſage (from Africa to the Weſt Indies) is a pleaſant thing to a Guinea captain,

captain, of which he is not often diſappointed. It ſaves the ſhip a great expence in wages; for many more mariners are wanted to collect the ſlaves on the coaſt, than to navigate the ſhip after ſhe is fully loaded. And it is not obſcurely hinted, that ill uſage, at leaſt, has often been tried, in order to produce it; which if it has not its full effect on the paſſage, makes the ſeamen quit the ſhip as ſoon as ſhe arrives in the Weſt Indies. I mean not here an undiſtinguiſhing cenſure: however oddly it may ſound, I have, in this line, known men of feeling, that were far above ſuch vile notions of parſimony. But the greateſt advocate for the trade will not ſay, that theſe laſt are the moſt numerous party.

Now if the ſlave trade were changed for an ordinary commerce, or mutual barter of commodities with Africa, this temptation to deſtroy or diſſipate ſeamen would be taken away. Some ſhips would load on the African coaſt directly for Britain; others would load with cattle, mules, rice, pipe ſtaves, &c. for the ſugar colonies. One great cauſe of an alarm in the ſugar colonies from the checking of their intercourſe with Ame-

rica, is the loſs of a market for their rum. This might be moſt profitably exchanged, by fitting it for the African market, and giving it in return for African commodities.* The quantity of goods exchanged for ſlaves in Africa, is perhaps the leaſt object of that commerce. The annual Britiſh exports to Africa are not eſtimated higher than £. 500,000, including a conſiderable quantity that is uſually exchanged with American and other foreign traders on the coaſt; about £. 50,000 of this is returned in ivory, gold duſt, &c. The greateſt part of profits of the ſlave trade is raiſed on the ſugar planter. It is true, ſlaves grow every year dearer on the coaſt, in proportion as the Africans become better acquainted with the value ſet by the white traders on their wretched countrymen. But at their higheſt price they have ſeldom, if ever, come up to one third of what they ſold for in the Weſt Indies, if valued as the goods for which they were bought were ſhipt in Britain. Till lately, a great proportion was bought on the coaſt, at a ſixth part of what

* The ſlave ſhips generally return from the Weſt Indies in ballaſt, and they go out to Africa but lightly freighted. The expence therefore of carrying rum to Africa cannot be conſidered as high, or capable of enhancing the price.

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the planter was obliged to pay for them. It is alſo to be remarked, that our preſent trade to Africa is confined to a few tyrants, and their brokers. But were the country once civilized, every perſon in it, who could labour with his hands, would make a demand on our manufactures, and extend our commerce. The change then propoſed here, ſo far from leſſening our trade, and the number of our ſeamen, would extend the one, and preſerve and increaſe the other in an almoſt ineſtimable proportion; and we have plainly ſhewn, that its effect on the trade of the new empire of America ought not to be the object of our concern.

To the objection that our quitting the ſlave trade would throw a profitable branch into the hands of our rivals, would improve their ſugar colonies, and advance them in naval importance, we anſwer, that this commerce can continue in no hands longer than the negroe countries remain in a ſtate of brutiſh barbariſm; for when they become civilized, it muſt ceaſe of courſe. And from our having been the moſt forward in this ſcandalous traffick, it becomes us to be the firſt to labour in effecting a reformation.

Were the tyrants on the ſlave coaſts made ſenſible, that riches conſiſted in the number and wealth of their ſubjects; inſtead of going to war to make priſoners, and ſell them for ſlaves, to be carried to a diſtant climate, among a ſtrange people, they would contend in encouraging the greateſt poſſible numbers to ſettle in and cultivate each his own territory, and would try to intercept thoſe ſent down to the ſlave market from the inland parts. The only effect therefore that this conſideration reſpecting our rivals ſhould produce is, at once, to ſet heartily to the work, that they may have the leſs time to reap advantage from the circumſtances.

But it is a notorious fact, that a conſiderable proportion of our African trade for the laſt 25 years has been actually directed to the ſupplying of the French colonies with ſlaves, and that the improvement ariſing thence contributed to enable them to make that formidable appearance with their navy in the beginning of the late war, which in the general opinion threatened to bring our exiſtence, as a naval power, to an end. Now, on the ſuppoſition that our ſlave trade is to continue on its former footing, and to

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be directed as before (perhaps, conſidering our ſuperior mercantile activity in a more profitable way for our rivals, than if they were to carry on the whole trade immediately with Africa) to the aggrandiſement of our rivals, I in the ſtrongeſt manner inſiſt, that the ſubject calls for the moſt ſerious deliberation, and the moſt pointed inquiries both from adminiſtration and parliament. I have long foreſeen the fatal conſequences of it, with an heart-felt concern for my country. And ſurely it deſerves to be diſcuſſed, whether a branch of trade, confeſſedly of ſome importance, but confined to two or three ports, ought at the expence of every human feeling to be put in competition with our future naval ſuperiority; or, if it muſt be preſerved, whether it ſhould not be confined to the demands of our own colonies. If I be aſked the queſtion, ſhould we refuſe, will not our rivals procure their ſupplies from other hands? I may anſwer by another queſtion; if we deliberately contribute to our rivals naval importance, ſhall we deſerve pity when we are cruſhed under it? But the truth is, if we were to abandon the trade, two thirds of the whole muſt fall to the ground; for all

other nations have already their ſhares in it according to their genius and demand.—It may perhaps not be generally known, that there are now Engliſh agents at Madrid, treating with the Spaniſh miniſtry for the annual delivery of 80,000 African ſlaves in the Spaniſh colonies.

But in the civilization of Africa we have a certain remedy againſt this danger. The French planters, by living as farmers on their plantations, and cultivating a freſher and more luxuriant ſoil than is contained in our colonies, and being leſs dependent than we are on foreigners for proviſions and other ſtores, can raiſe ſugar at two-thirds of its uſual price in the Britiſh colonies; whoſe proprietors live generally in Europe, and require large remittances to ſupport them, while other managers and their families muſt alſo be maintained to do their duty on their plantations, and neither cattle nor proviſions are raiſed on them to leſſen the expence. I reckon twenty-five ſhillings ſterling per cwt. on the ſpot to be a very moderate ſaving peace price for ſugar in ſome of the Britiſh colonies, and to be equal

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to about ſixteen ſhillings in the French colonies. But ſuch ſugar is raiſed in the Eaſt-Indies by free people for three ſhillings and four-pence per cwt. Nor is there reaſon to doubt, that it might be raiſed by freemen in Africa, if not at ſo low a price as this laſt, yet ſurely much below even the French price. Africans, under the preſſure of ſlavery, are the manufacturers of ſugar and rum in the colonies; why may they not be equally ſo in their own country working for themſelves? Were this event brought about by the civilization of Africa, it would be impoſſible to raiſe ſugar, that could command the market, by the expenſive culture of ſlaves. And if the French perſevered, they could not, by the utmoſt ſtrictneſs of regulation, ſupply more than their own country; and their trade with the ſugar colonies, inſtead of bidding fair, as at preſent by our help, to engroſs a great ſhare of the European and American markets, muſt then be confined to their home demands.

If we continue to encourage our ſlave trade for the ſupply of the French colonies, (that of the Spaniſh colonies is yet only

ideal) ſuch is the extenſiveneſs and fertility of their iſlands, particularly Hiſpaniola, ſuch the frugality of their planters modes of life, that in leſs than twenty years, even in ſpite of our enormous bounty of twenty ſhillings per cwt. they will worm us out of every foreign market for ſugar. This ability on the part of our rivals of extending indefinitely their ſugar market, which muſt in time draw after it a naval ſuperiority, requires to be ſolemnly conſidered, at leaſt as far as we contribute to it, that thoſe methods may be embraced, that can beſt counteract its effects reſpecting us, and help to preſerve our rank as a naval power. After laying all this before the reader, we may confidently conclude, that the African trade is more confined in its utility, than is generally imagined, and that of late years it has contributed more to the aggrandiſement of our rivals, than of our own national wealth.

We come now to conſider the probable conſequences to our own ſugar colonies, that may be expected from advancing the condition of their ſlaves. That Britain has a majority in them attached to her laws and her

her intereſt, it would be ungenerous not freely to acknowledge; and whatever prejudices exiſted among them againſt a connection with her, when compared with her rival, they have in a great meaſure been done away in the ſmall iſlands, by their late experience of the nature of a French government. Still it is not to be concealed, that in ſeveral of them there is a ſtrong lurking bias for the new empire of America. The conduct of Barbadoes and Jamaica, in the beginning of the late conteſt, marked this too ſtrongly to admit of a contradiction; the reſtleſs emigrations from the ſugar colonies thither continue to mark it. The Americans indeed have not yet been able to give any ſpecimen of liberality of ſentiment to encourage this bias, or of advantages to be gained by eſpouſing their cauſe. But that individuals, who have occaſion to wiſh for an eaſy method of paying debts, ſhould delight in change, even when it promiſes little, needs not to be wondered at.

But ſuppoſing this bias, and the propriety of it, ſtill it is a doubtful point, if any conſiderable ſhare of Weſt Indian propriety will be

be in the families, who now poſſeſs it, at that period when Britain and France ſhall be ſo weak, and America ſo ſtrong in naval force, as to allow of our ſugar iſlands being added as an appendage to the American empire. Though it may be an object of deliberation with whom they may beſt be connected, yet it will not be diſputed that they can never think of ſetting up for themſelves. They muſt ever continue to belong to ſome one or other naval power; and ſurely from preſent appearances no period can be aſſigned, when that power ſhall be America. Yet ſuppoſe every thing to happen as ſpeedily as it is fondly imagined, and obſerve the conſequences.

America, under a republican government, can never be but a disjointed unwieldy ſtate, which nothing but common danger can poſſibly unite in one purpoſe. If the ſugar iſlands be connected with them, it muſt be by conqueſt, when they are become ſuperior at ſea to the European naval powers. By the maxim on which America ſeparated from Britain, no countries, between which ſeas intervene, can be incorporated together.

The

The ſugar colonies, therefore, can never hope to be allowed to partake of any particular American conſtitution. They muſt be governed as conqueſts belonging to the union. When they were firſt ſettled, it was by Engliſhmen intitled to all the privileges and laws of the mother country, and preſerving all the rights and claims of citizens. But when ſubdued by an American ſquadron, they will be conſidered as a deſpiſed part of an hated people. Some American rice or tobacco planter, who perhaps has the clanking of the chains of his own famiſhed ſlaves ringing in his ears, will make flaming ſpeeches againſt ſugar planters. He will call them inexorable tyrants over helpleſs ſlaves. He will adviſe to have them treated as ſlaves; and he will offer himſelf to be the inſtrument, becauſe he is well acquainted with the mode.—When this deſired change commences in the ſugar colonies, what a fine outlet will there be for all the turbulent ſpirits of America in filling the departments of law, police, cuſtoms, and every civil eſtabliſhment, not omitting the confiſcations, that ſagacious intereſt will diſcover or make. Perhaps, when too late, the

the indolent rule of Britain, then no more, may be an object of regret.

Again: Suppoſe our ſugar colonies a favoured part of this empire, when will America be able to give them the ſame high prices for their ſtaple, that Britain has long afforded them? As the children of Britain, their planters had the monopoly of her market. They cannot belong to America, till ſhe has driven out every European power, and ſeized their colonies for herſelf. She will conſider herſelf under no particular tie to give them the preference, but will ſupply her wants from the cheapeſt market. Farther, money (the foundation of high prices) can never be in plenty in a country, that is not far advanced in manufactures. Politicians have not yet fixed the time, when the population of America ſhall be ſuppoſed able to manufacture for herſelf, far leſs for a foreign market. Whenever, therefore, our colonies are ſubjected to America, the price of ſugar in them muſt fall one half, and every proprietor muſt become a bankrupt; for their opulence, their very being as planters, depends on their union with Britain.

Suppoſe

Suppoſe then none but freemen inhabiting the ſugar colonies, they can propoſe no benefit by changing their protector. Nay, it muſt continue to be their intereſt to cultivate, and even maintain, at the hazard of their lives, an union with their mother country, in whoſe government they ſhare, who alone can be expected to rule them with a mother's indulgence, who alone can afford them a price for their commodities equal to the expence of their culture. Yet, this being the caſe, why have we ſuch exaggerated accounts of the neceſſity of their intire dependence on the new ſtates? Why do they not patiently ſuffer ſome temporary inconveniency, till matters can be ſettled on their new foundation?

Such indeed is the growing demand for ſugar in Britain and Ireland, as to call for all that will ever probably be produced in our remaining iſlands. Doubtleſs they (Jamaica eſpecially) are capable in themſelves of producing much more than they have ever yet ſent to market. But ſuch have been the conſequences of the ſeveral events, that have happened within theſe laſt twelve years,

years, that in any caſe it will be long before they can much exceed what they have formerly made; nor can they poſſibly increaſe their quantity ſo faſt, as it probably will be called for. But as ſoon as any revolution deſtroys the monopoly of the Britiſh market, the Britiſh ſugar colonies muſt dwindle into inſignificancy.

One reaſon ſhould ever induce Weſt Indian proprietors to prefer a connection with an European power to one with America. Europe muſt ever be dependent on the Weſt Indies or Africa for this now neceſſary of life, ſugar. Europe is therefore the proper market for ſugar, and it muſt be the intereſt of the planter to have a particular country in Europe, where he can lodge his produce, till he can ſend it to the place of conſumption. And where trade is freeſt, and the merchants have moſt money, and give the longeſt credit, (in all which Britain hath the advantage) will be the beſt ſpot for fixing their ſtaple. We might add here, that the ſituation of things, and the manners prevailing in America, muſt change greatly, before that country becomes as agreeable a retreat

retreat as Britain to the rich man or the valetudinarian. Setting therefore aſide long habits of acquaintance, the ſameneſs of laws and cuſtoms, it muſt alſo, in reſpect of intereſt, continue to be the planters wiſh, that Britain may ever be able to protect her colonies, and keep them united to her government. And the advancing of the condition of their ſlaves, or even the communicating intire freedom to them, can make no difference in the nature of the union, will rather enable the colonies to defend themſelves, and do their part to preſerve the connection, whereon their own proſperity depends. And it otherwiſe indiſputably appears to be the proprietor's intereſt to employ only freemen on his plantation.

If it be aſked how are ſugar plantations to be cultivated, without the uſual ſupplies of ſlaves from Africa; I anſwer, on old ſettled plantations, ſuch ſupplies are only now neceſſary from the original ill aſſortment of the ſexes, the oppreſſive manner in which they have been worked, and the niggardlineſs with which they have been fed. Had they been treated with humanity, and had

had their population, inſtead of being checked by every vile method, been encouraged, the ſlaves, brought into our old colonies, would long ago have been ſo greatly multiplied, as to have afforded ſufficient numbers to have peopled the iſlands acquired by the peace of 1763. There are now ſufficient numbers in the ſeveral iſlands to do this in the gradual manner, that will be moſt profitable in the end, if we begin even thus late to treat them generally like human creatures.

But I have not the vanity to imagine that any thing advanced here, or any thing, however juſt or practicable, that can be propoſed by ſpeculative men, will operate at once on the public. The utmoſt that reaſoning can be expected to do, is gradually to correct and inform common opinion, and change inſenſibly the popular way of thinking. But ſuppoſe a ſtatute enacted, that the preſent ſlave trade ſhould ceaſe after a period of three or ſix years, every planter would immediately ſet himſelf ſeriouſly to ſtock his plantation, and to give ſuch orders for the treatment of his ſlaves, as would favour their

their health and population. This in the mean time would divert our ſlave trade from the improvement of the French colonies to that of our own: and the end of the period would find the ſeveral iſlands in a ſtate of opulence and happineſs that they never yet have experienced, and prepared for that extenſion of privileges, and unexcepting freedom, which is the ſcope of our argument. But in making this ſuppoſition, I mean not to be accountable for thoſe barbarities, and outrages to humanity, that the ſhorteſt exiſtence of the ſlave trade muſt in the mean time neceſſarily occaſion.

On the ſuppoſition that the ſugar colonies, either by their own choice, or the events of war, are ſeparated from Britain, is ſuggeſted the poſſibility of our being ſupplied with ſugar from Africa. Indeed the improvement of Africa is a compenſation which we owe for the horrid barbarities we have been inſtrumental in procuring to be exerciſed on her ſons, both in their native country, and in the Weſt Indies: and certainly we might proceed to great lengths without affecting our ſugar colonies; rather they might get many other ſupplies than

ſlaves from Africa. We mean nothing hoſtile to our colonies by the plan. Such is indeed the nature of their connection with Britain, that nothing but unavoidable neceſſity ſhould diſſolve it. They were ſettled by Engliſhmen, with Engliſh money, on the faith of a monopoly of the Britiſh market. Without this monopoly they could not continue to be cultivated. On the other hand, hitherto the whole of their profits has been wealth added to the Britiſh ſtock. The bond therefore is reciprocal, and ought not to be weakened on one ſide, till it has been cancelled on the other. The colonies cannot find an equivalent for the Britiſh market; Britain will not ſoon find a nurſery for her navy equal to the Weſt Indian trade, ſhould ſhe by any revolution loſe it. He who is a friend to the one muſt conſult the intereſt of the other; for their proſperity conſiſts in their union. Nor can Britain take any ſtep in contradiction to it without forfeiting her honour, nor the coloniſts without riſking their poſſeſſions. They muſt exchange conceſſions; the coloniſts ſuffering inconveniencies, rather than injure the commerce and navigation of Britain; Britain ſacrificing advantages that her ſuperiority in money

money and manufactures may give her to preſerve her colonies in a condition to ſupply her market with ſugar. But what is mutually to be ſurrendered will be diſcovered beſt from the level, on which things ſettle naturally of themſelves, if we prevent it not by our precipitation in fixing regulations, that cannot be reclaimed, before things have accommodated themſelves to their new ſtate; and much might be done for Africa, and great advantage drawn from it, without loſing ſight of this purpoſe.

I ſhall here ſubjoin an extract of a letter which I have juſt received from that humane intelligent ſea officer, who favoured me with the letter that cloſes the diſcuſſion of the capacity of negroes in the Eſſay, and who in his late command on the coaſt of Africa laid himſelf out for information on the ſubject, to ſee what could be ſuggeſted or propoſed to check or give a new turn to the ſlave trade. His ſtay on the coaſt was ſhort; but did every one, according to his opportunities, apply with the like ſentiment and good-will to collect facts, it would ſoon enable us to ſtrike ſome plan out to put an

end to this diabolical commerce, or at leaſt ſtrip it of its preſent horrors.

" When the Portugueſe extended their diſcoveries along the coaſt of Africa, they were very aſſiduous in introducing the Chriſtian religion in that part called the Grain Coaſt, from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas. They were at firſt ſucceſsful; but when they emigrated to the Brazils, the negroes relapſed into their former idolatry. Many of the negroes at Goree are Mahometans, but in general they are Pagans of the religion and language of the Joliffs. The French have been induſtrious to teach them manners, and their language; but have paid no attention to religion. I viſited all the chiefs of the negroes in our ſettlements from Santa Apollonia to Athera, which is upwards of 250 miles, and found the police and puniſhment of all crimes ſupported by the ſlave trade. Thoſe who commit crimes or treſpaſſes againſt their laws, are, at the deciſion of twelve elders, ſold for ſlaves for the uſe of their government, and the ſupport of their chiefs. Theft, adultery, and murder, are the higheſt crimes, and, whenever they are detected, ſubject the whole family to ſlavery. But any

any individual condemned to ſlavery for the crime of his relation, may redeem his own perſon, by furniſhing two ſlaves in his room. Or when a man commits one of the above cardinal crimes, all the male part of his family are forfeited to ſlavery; if a woman, the female part is ſold. While on the coaſt, I ſaw inſtances of this ſort ſo truly cruel, as made my very boſom bleed. This traffick in crimes makes the chiefs vigilant. Nor do our planters, who purchaſe them, uſe any pains to inſtruct them in religion, to make them amends for the oppreſſion thus exerciſed on them. I am ſorry to ſay they are unnaturally averſe to every thing that tends to it; yet the Portugueſe, French and Spaniards, in their ſettlements, ſucceed in their attempts to inſtruct them, as much to the advantage of their commerce, as of religion. It is for the ſake of Chriſtianity, and the advantages accompanying it, that Engliſh ſlaves embrace every occaſion of deſerting to the ſettlements of theſe nations.

I had ſuch a proof of this religious attention in the Portugueſe of the iſland of St. Thomas under the Line, as I ſhall always reflect on with pleaſure. This iſland was

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once rich, populous, and full of fair churches, ſchools, convents, and other pious ſeminaries. The biſhop of Loando was joint biſhop of it, and viſited it annually. It is now fallen much below its former ſtate. But there are ſtill upwards of 15000 negroe Chriſtians in it, inſtructed to read and write, who daily attend divine worſhip, clean and well clad. Friars of all orders, and prieſts of every denomination, are choſen from among them, and are inſtructed in divine worſhip and the Chriſtian rites. And though the eccleſiaſtick wealth is waſting faſt away, yet there ſtill remains that good order and moral conduct among them, which religion alone teaches, or can inſpire. There are circumſtances in popery that a ſenſible man cannot approve of; but the peculiar zeal with which the Portugueſe have propagated the doctrine of Chriſt is truly meritorious, while the liſtleſs indifference of Proteſtants is to us a ſinful reproach." Thus far this worthy officer.

This gentleman, during his ſhort ſtay on the coaſts, probably had not an opportunity of ſeeing thoſe crowds of ſlaves that are driven down like ſo many ſheep, perhaps

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1000 miles from the ſea coaſt, and who are generally inhabitants of villages that have been ſurrounded in the night-time by an armed force, and carried off to be ſold to our traders on the coaſt. The annual exportation of ſlaves from Africa has exceeded 100,000. The ſea coaſt, on which this inhuman refinement has been introduced by the European traders, could not have ſupplied ſuch a number of culprits, without having been long ago depopulated.

From this account it plainly appears, that the ſlave trade occaſions a degree of barbarous cruelty and oppreſſion, which humanity, in its loweſt ſtate, muſt have revolted at, if not ſupported by avarice, and a luſt for gain. We go on the coaſt, and tempt the natives, with what to them are articles of luxury, to ſweep away, for the real or pretended fault of an individual, whole families in exchange, becauſe they can ſupply us with no other articles that we deſire to poſſeſs. But from the ſucceſs of the Portugueſe among them, it is clear, the Africans are capable of inſtruction and improvement, and that agriculture and arts might eaſily be introduced among them, and lay a foundation

tion for trade, that far from wounding humanity in this high degree, might raiſe and improve it, and be a bleſſing and advantage to all concerned.

Why might not the culture of ſugar, tobacco, indigo, &c. be introduced into St. Thomas's? And why might not that iſland ſend out, in time, negroe teachers and artiſts to inſtruct and improve their brethren on the continent? By ſtopping the importation of ſlaves into our colonies, you increaſe the value of thoſe who are already there; you oblige their maſters to uſe them well, and improve their condition. But while ever the ſlave trade continues open to ſupply the ravages made by oppreſſion and famine, one great inducement is wanting for treating ſlaves with humanity. Without meaning to caſt any reproach on maſters, who, like all other bodies, conſiſt of good, bad, and indifferent men, I affirm, that till ſome check or new turn be given to the ſlave trade, it will be found a moſt difficult buſineſs to advance the condition of ſlaves in our colonies, ſo as to anſwer the fond wiſhes of piety and philanthropy reſpecting them.

Aug. 10, 1784.

FINIS.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE preceding Inquiry has been ſo long in the preſs, as to give the Author an opportunity of taking notice of a curious attack made on him by an anonymous writer, which charges him with having written certain "Thoughts on the Slavery of the Ne-" groes in the American Colonies." Theſe Thoughts the Author knew nothing of, and never ſaw them till they were in print. As far as he is the Author, therefore, of theſe Thoughts, the virulent abuſe thrown on him by this enemy in the dark is altogether miſapplied. But though from ſome ſtrong traits in the ſtyle, he believes it would not be a difficult matter to trace his adverſary out, he ſhall leave him to enjoy his unconteſted victory, with his hearty prayers that he may learn and know the truth; and then the Thoughts that he gives to the publick will be very differently expreſſed.

But as he appeals to my knowledge of certain facts, and ſilence may be conſtrued into aſſent, I muſt beg leave to ſet him right.

There is no law (but an old neglected one in the Bible) in St. Kitts, to confine the puniſhment of a ſlave to thirty-nine laſhes. And had Moſes had the cart-whip in contemplation, he would have reſtrained his people to a much ſmaller number; for that inſtrument, in good hands, would ſoon have made the poor ſufferer "vile in his brother's "ſight." There is an inſtance in Antigua of a white man being hanged for the murder of a negroe; but in the iſland to which he refers, I never knew of any inquiſition for negroe blood. The pickling of the wounds from ſtripes is not confined to negroe freemen, as he may learn, if he will make a proper inquiry.

I wiſh his deſcription of the treatment of ſick and old ſlaves were true; but it was not quite ſo good in the quarter where I was beſt acquainted. His account of the peculium of ſlaves is altogether new to me; nor are

are "the means of even a bare livelihood" placed in the reach of four out of five ſlaves with whoſe ſituation I was ever acquainted.

It is more pleaſing to me to communicate an account of the virtues and improvement of an honeſt African, that I have juſt met with in the late travels of Five Daniſh philoſophers *, originally publiſhed in German, and ſince tranſlated into French, in three volumes, quarto.—Farhan, a jet black negroe, was carried a boy into Arabia, and there ſold to an officer in the court of the Imam or prince of Yemen. His maſter gave him every advantage of education, and entruſted him, as he grew up, with the management of his affairs. Theſe he conducted with ſo much propriety and addreſs, as to attract the notice of the prince, who took him near his perſon, and afterwards made him governor of Loheia, a city on the ſea-coaſt. There our travellers found him ruling his people, as a kind father would his children. To theſe travellers he behaved with the utmoſt kindneſs, generoſity, and even

* Voyage en Arabie & en d'autres Pays circonvoiſins, par C. Niebuhr.

polite-

politeneſs, expreſſed the greateſt fondneſs for their converſation, and a warm deſire to learn and be informed of whatever was ſtriking in Europeans. In ſhort they, when ſpeaking of him, call him the good Farhan, and had many ſad opportunities of contraſting his behaviour with the other native Arabian governors. Here then we have an African towering above the ſubtile Arabian; and ſhall his country, by European inſolence, be ſtill depreſſed in the ſcale of reaſon and human excellence? It is ignorant pride that fancies a diſtinction to its prejudice.

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